

Ornithological Notes for Derbyshire, 1925.

By N. H. FITZHERBERT.

I MUST preface my notes for 1925 by apologising for the fact that they are even more sketchy than usual.

I hope that in future the yearly notes may be written by some more competent hand, as I find that I have not the necessary time to devote to the task.

January was a very mild month this year and aconites and snowdrops were out quite at the beginning. The first Missel-Thrush was heard on the 3rd, but Song-Thrushes were not in song at Somersal till the 11th, there being very few of them about in the early part of the year. If there had been more, no doubt they would have been heard earlier. There was some snow during February but it did not stay long and on the whole the weather continued mild; on the 18th, the Chaffinch's song was heard for the first time, but Blackbirds in my experience were silent till the 27th. March was variable, but on the 16th I saw a Song-Thrush's nest at Somersal quite ready for lining. However at the end of the month the weather was cold and the beginning of April found everything very backward. During a few warm days in the second week of April, Wheatears, Chiffchaffs, Swallows, Willow-Warblers and Tree-Pipits arrived, but after this the cold winds kept everything back, including the migrants. It must be ten years since there was a really warm April, so it is quite time we had another. During the first three weeks of May there was a wonderful advance in vegetation under the

influence of the welcome warm spell. The winter began early; there was no snow till towards the end of November but before that there had been sharp frosts and the weather continued cold right up to the end of the year. The conditions were thus not encouraging to the winter songsters and apart from the indomitable Robins there was not much song to be heard. For the first time for many years there was a real 'old fashioned' Christmas. As far as my own observations go, not much destruction was caused to bird life by the cold. Long-tailed Tits usually suffer severely and I was glad to see that several at any rate had survived and to hear the same account from Mr. Chambers in the Chesterfield district.

ARRIVAL OF SPRING MIGRANTS:—The following is the list, very incomplete I fear.

Wheatear—Near Chesterfield, April 5 (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 8.

Chiffchaff—Near Chesterfield, April 8 (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 9.

Swallow—Somersal, April 11; near Chesterfield, April 23 (C.B.C.).

Willow-Warbler—Somersal, April 12; near Chesterfield, April 13 (C.B.C.).

Tree-Pipit—Somersal, April 12; near Chesterfield, April 23 (C.B.C.).

Yellow Wagtail—Near Chesterfield, April 23 (C.B.C.).

Whinchat—Near Chesterfield, April 24 (C.B.C.).

Sandpiper—Near Chesterfield, April 24 (C.B.C.).

Cuckoo—Near Chesterfield, April 23 (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 30.

Whitethroat—Near Chesterfield, April 25 (C.B.C.); Somersal, May 2 (several).

Lesser Whitethroat—Somersal, April 26.

Martin—Somersal, April 26.

Swift—Near Chesterfield, May 3 (C.B.C.).

Spotted Flycatcher—Somersal, May 5.

Turtle-Dove—Near Chesterfield, May 5 (C.B.C.).

Corncrake—Near Chesterfield, May 8 (C.B.C.).

DEPARTURE OF MIGRANTS:—

At Somersal I heard Chiffchaffs singing several times during August and September, September 14 being the last day ; I heard no late Willow-Warblers.

Near Chesterfield the following were noted by Mr. Chambers, who also records the arrival of the Fieldfares on Oct. 23:—

Swift—Aug. 14.

Martins—Oct. 7.

CLASSIFIED NOTES.

Goldfinch.—On two or three occasions in August a family of Goldfinches was to be seen at Somersal being fed by the parent birds; I hope they may have bred in the district, where they are all too scarce.

Lesser Redpoll.—This bird seems to be commoner in the Darley Dale district than I had imagined. There must have been three or four nests in the grounds of Stancliffe Hall this year, one of which at least hatched out safely.

Dipper.—I have received an interesting account from Mr. P. Turnbull of his unsuccessful attempts for the last three years to protect a Dipper's nest on the Bentley Brook close to Sandybrook Hall, even a wire entanglement being ineffectual to save it from the trippers. In the same way Dippers have in the past regularly made a nest at the source of the Lathkill near Bakewell. As far as I know, the nest was always robbed or destroyed, usually at Easter, but probably the annual attempt is still made. It is a great shame that such interesting and harmless birds are not allowed to hatch out their young in peace.

Bewick's Swan.—A Bewick's Swan was to be seen on the Hardwick Ponds for two or three weeks in March. At first there were four birds, two young and two old, but three left and one young bird remained (C.B.C.).

Water-Rail.—In December, a Water-Rail was seen near Somersal, the first I have heard of in that neighbourhood for very many years.
